

THE FULL ACCOUNT OF ANGLICAN ORDERS

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THE REFORMATION, THE MASS, AND THE PRIESTHOOD. Ernest C. Messenger, Ph. D. London: Longmans, 1936-7. Vol. I, *The Revolt from the Medieval Church*, xii, 577. Vol. II, *Rome and the Revolted Church*, xix, 772.

Although this work was finished more than two years ago, its unique apologetic value may excuse a belated notice here. It is the first complete account of the historical and dogmatic background of the Papal constitution *Apostolicae curæ*, by which Leo XIII in 1896 uttered with final authority the Catholic judgment on Anglican ordinations. Inevitably lengthy, it is neither heavy nor obscure, and the interlacing threads of its argument are kept well in order. We have never read with more untiring interest any account of a prolonged controversy. Each doctrinal factor and episode is treated in its historical setting. Passages from ancient and foreign sources are well translated. The value of evidence is not exaggerated, and the same quality of impartial poise marks the writer's conclusions, which are fairly as well as clearly stated. Documentation is abundant, and each volume is separately and thoroughly indexed. In the solid usefulness of the whole work it would be hard to indicate a serious defect.

Little that was new in substance could have been adduced. But, apart from new emphasis on several matters known but somewhat overlooked, it is no trifling service to have presented in one orderly compass the whole matter of this complicated subject. These two volumes rank as a thorough work of reference, and should serve as a guide to any future treatment of particular details of their theme. As an apologetic theologian Dr. Messenger has at times appeared to us less successful in constructive theory than in thorough and well digested research. The latter, always sustained with industry, patience, and discrimination, is his outstanding talent, and it is well invested in this latest and longest of his writings.

It is true that Anglicanism is of little import to American Catholics. The Protestant Episcopal Church has not retained its colonial prestige. Its average member is no longer distinguished by social or cultural eminence. In point of numbers three other Protestant denominations have outstripped it. Its corporate energy is weakened by internal want of unanimity. Moreover, the notion that it possesses a sacerdotal ministry is confined to its "Anglo-

Catholic" minority. On this subject Catholic teaching encounters little opposition in the United States, whereas a very different situation confronts the Church in England.

Yet even in this country Dr. Messenger's work ought to be well known. The established Church of England is not only the mother of the "episcopal" species of Protestantism here and in British Canada. It is the historic original of the English Reformation, the specifically English type of Protestantism. Moreover, it happens to imitate most closely the outward form of the Church. Since no heretical system rejects Christianity entire (except by abandoning the common motive of all genuine belief), organized heresy may resemble the kingdom of Christ in an indefinite number of degrees. But an object lesson is the most effective; and Anglicanism exhibits persons entitled bishops, priests, and deacons, and units of division known as provinces, dioceses, and parishes. The average Anglican minister, too, adopts the conventional dress of a priest. To appraise such a system rightly, we cannot know too much of the history of its origin and growth.

The history of Christianity in England—through British, Saxon, and Norman periods, to the beginning of the sixteenth century—consistently shows it to be as loyally subject to the See of Peter as in any other European nation. With this background it is important to grasp the fact that the modern Church of England is not an older organization with a transferred allegiance, not a national schism from the Catholic Church of the ages, but a society wholly founded anew in 1559. The Church in England was first forced into schism by Henry VIII, but did not continue so. After the brief reign of Edward VI it was reclaimed to its original Catholic unity under Mary (1553-1558), whose death left Christian England fully restored to its normal state. Her successor Elizabeth at once attempted a new schism by reviving her father's claim to spiritual supremacy. But she failed to detach the Church. It was but four years since the bishops had knelt in the House of Lords to be absolved from the sin of having admitted Henry's claim. They refused to head a second schism by repeating the sin. The only renegade among them ceased to exercise his office; all the rest were promptly deprived, and died in confinement or exile. The many individual Catholics who fell away to the state had no episcopal leaders to give their apostasy corporate entity. The others, who stood firm, had the secret ministry of their lawful priests, now marked down for death. This faithful remnant never forsook the obedience and communion of the Supreme Pontiff, who, with his successors, continued to govern them through such canonical agencies as the times allowed, until a local hierarchy could be restored to their descendants. No other group is continuous, by right or in fact, with the original English Church.

But now the Crown, having seized the temporalities, had to provide incumbents. Rallied to the royal supremacy, and not even eligible to the wretched title of a schism, "the Church of England as by law established" was born of Elizabeth's first parliament, early in 1559. No Christian society was ever more devoid of corporate identity with any before it. Of its first prelate, Matthew Parker, not one of the four consecrators had ordinary jurisdiction at the time. Two of them, deprived in Mary's reign, had valid episcopal orders from Henry's time, but did not now transmit them even irregularly. Their rite had been composed from Lutheran models by Cranmer in 1549. It knew no power of Christian sacrifice, but only a commission to "dispense the Word of God and His holy Sacraments;" and it stood officially identified with express denial of transubstantiation, the eucharistic sacrifice, and the sacramental nature of holy order. Whatever the positive object of the novel rite, no one dreamt of it as a commission to the very function execrated by its own composers. The titles "bishop" and "priest" were retained for convention's sake, as the preface to the ordinal shows, but their altered meaning was proclaimed by word and deed. Whatever remained, the Mass was banished.

With a dominant Lutheran tendency the Church of England began its career as definitely evangelical. This original and still surviving conception of its nature is the only one in which theory and practice are both at home. Had not the more radical evangelicism of the English Puritans aimed at ridding the land of bishops and kings alike, the "high church" reaction of the school of Laud would have had no occasion. It was feeble enough at that, in its vague protest that some sort of Divine right attended bishops as well as kings. At its very zenith, in the days of the Non-Jurors, it probably never caught that sacerdotal vision which Oxford was to read into it long after. When, in Hanoverian times, the deistic philosophy was paralysing English Protestantism and planting the seed of yet another (the liberal, or "broad church") interpretation of Anglicanism, the high church idea had no message of salvation. False rationalism, then as ever, could only be defied by appeal to a Divine authority such as no one ascribed to "the historic episcopate." Evangelicism, though equally inefficient and much perturbed by the Wesleyan movement, could at least continue to live quietly upon state subsidy and prestige.

But when, in 1833, the state itself began to question the value of Elizabeth's creation, there were searchings of heart indeed. They issued in the only theory of the Anglican system that yet remained untested. Should disestablishment come, the residual phenomenon was still "the historic episcopate"—stately cathedrals, venerable sees, dignified and scholarly incumbents. A tactual ceremony of induction could be shown to have continued. Why

should it not have transmitted the full Divine commission and powers of the Apostles? If it had done so, the Anglican Church might be Catholic in the historic meaning of the word—not as reformed, but as having managed to withstand reform. The fact of a continuous visible succession, even with one perilously feeble link, might establish union with antiquity so long as its sacramental validity was simply assumed.

Newman, the author of the new theory and the leader in its gradual development, had been evangelically reared in innocence of the high church idea. Thus, in fact, do some of his critics explain his later secession, but in vain. Disrobed of its borrowed purple, the Divine right of kings, that misty creed could never have held him. But a valid apostolic succession could for Newman transfigure the Anglican system into something careless of dis-establishment, a kingdom not of this world. Inheriting the Apostles' commission, it must understand Scripture in the authority of apostolic tradition, of which the common doctrine of the Fathers would be both the record and the norm. Judged by this truer standard of belief and practice, the Reformation must be found wanting. In "the Lord's Supper" Christ would still be really present, and truly though impassibly offered there, as all antiquity had taught. Inalienably endowed with such a function, the Anglican Church, however lax and forgetful of itself, must be originally apostolic; if apostolic, then radically Catholic; if Catholic, then holy in virtue of sacramental grace; and if all three, then also one with the larger Catholic world—invisibly one for the time, in the common specific nature, but with a congruous destiny to visible unity in time to come.

Such in essence was the creed of the Oxford Movement. Rapidly it advanced and spread, stirring earnest minds and chivalrous souls. In ten years' time "the historic episcopate" found itself challenged on all hands to contemplate its own image thus transfigured. Reluctantly it did so, and then, without the least reluctance, voted that image a strange and impertinent caricature with an exotic model. Newman's own theories, never barren theories to him, made the ban of the bishops decisive. He avowed himself mistaken in his new conception of Anglicanism. Others, who inherit it from him, have decided that they understand the episcopal office better than its incumbents do. After the lapse of a century they are still waiting for the bishops to agree with them.

If such be the faith of the Anglo-Catholic, what must the validity of his orders mean to him? It remains the foundation of his whole "position," no matter how often this may have to be "reconstructed" after damage to its upper structure by some fresh repudiation of Catholic principle on the part of his own superiors. The persuasion of his sacerdotal power—received in spite of the bishop who ordained him—when wrought by habit into the

devotional fiber of his life, becomes the one thing that he cannot examine impartially. The subject is strictly *tabu*.

The incredible ignorance of public fact involved in this fixed idea is what impresses the reader of Dr. Messenger's pages. They demonstrate its futility in a score of different ways, by the sheer logic of historical facts in the simplest exposition of their religious import, unqualified by any special pleading. Three doctrines of the Faith are clearly at stake: the eucharistic Christ, the Church's offering of Him to His Eternal Father in every Mass, and the consequent conception of the nature of Christian priesthood. The scope of Volume I is to trace these truths in biblical, patristic, and scholastic teaching, to their full stature in that doctrinal inheritance which Protestantism spurned, and then to view the first steps of England's part in this apostasy, ending with the death of Edward VI in 1553.

Dr. Messenger demonstrates that the Real Presence and the Sacrifice of the Mass are well grounded in Scripture and clearly taught by the Fathers. Tracing them further in the scholastic period, he does not neglect the main features of variant theological opinion, especially in the doctrine of holy order. Even the student of formal dogma may benefit in his own pursuit of these three doctrines by adopting this exposition as a guiding outline of their history. This done, we are introduced to their negation by the leaders of Protestant revolt on the continent of Europe. The teachings of these heresiarchs on the subjects in hand, and the measure of agreement and difference among themselves and their first followers, are clearly defined and fully illustrated from original sources. Just here we would mention a somewhat recurrent subject on which the author expends much fruitful research. Anglicans have become much wedded to an assumption that their thirty-first Article of Religion—the thirtieth in Cranmer's original forty-two—does not impugn the authentic Catholic doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass, as defined by Trent, but a "popular error" of medieval origin, applying the propitiation of the Cross to original sin, and that of the Mass to actual. After showing that this discredited opinion of a few theologians never did gain any general footing, particularly in England, and was therefore not the scope of Cranmer's censure, Dr. Messenger also deals with the Anglican subterfuge of distinction, with the same incentive, between "the sacrifice of the Mass" and "the sacrifices of masses," tracing this plural form of the phrase to a Catholic source both contemporary and fully authentic. He leaves no doubt as to what was the doctrine actually condemned by the official Anglican confession.

In passing from the continent to the revolt in England under Henry VIII, we are now able to detect the affinities revealed by certain terms and phrases already consecrated to the service of Protestantism. Here, too, a new

point is well made. A rather common persuasion conceives of Henry as a leader in schism, but, except for his denial of papal jurisdiction, never a friend of the new religion. Dr. Messenger conclusively refutes this error, at least for the later years of Henry's career. He reviews the Lutheran and other Protestant missions invited to England by the king himself for conference with Anglican leaders, and gives us the recorded results of their negotiations. Where these exist in English, they contain some of the very language of the Prayer Book of 1552, revealing Henry as the real patron of much that has been generally ascribed to Edward VI and his Protestant council. The Defender of the Faith had lived to become his old opponent's convert and supporter.

In the brief reign of Edward the new rite of ordination was composed and first employed. Its character and aim as an implement of "the reform" are now discussed on positive grounds. The prototypes of the Articles of Religion, the official Catechism, and all the influential documents of this period are also treated in text and historical occasion. Where they lack legal or canonical authority from the Anglican viewpoint, this is candidly stated, and such documents are not displayed as effective in public force. There is nothing either irrelevant or one-sided in this catalog of England's first religious innovations; it is both complete and accurate for the doctrines involved in the author's dominant theme. A concluding chapter sums up the volume's data and their pertinence to the whole discussion.

The second volume is the longer. Its third and last Appendix presents a long list of corrections of minor errata occurring in Volume I, and chiefly suggestive of haste, imperfect proofing, and some inconsistency in methods of reference, but nowhere affecting the substance of either text or documentation. Volume II is practically free from such defects. After meeting in its introduction the chief public criticisms of its predecessor, it first discusses thoroughly the corporate reunion of the schismatical Church with the Vicar of Christ during the reign of Mary. In the author's long review of events, canonical powers, and instances of their exercise, which bear upon clerical rehabilitation, his predominant order is that of succession in time. Effects are not merely inferred from their causes, but identified with individual names and dates collected into their proper places. Aware of Anglican misinterpretation of the records of the time (especially in such pseudo-historical polemics as Frere's *Marian Reaction*), Dr. Messenger not only notices these cavils directly, but forestalls them by ample positive exposition of every point that lends them occasion. Mary's reign, of course, is of first importance to the record of an unvarying Catholic rejection of Anglican "priesthood" from its very beginning; and the fact of such an original

rejection is here placed beyond reasonable denial. In fact, this exposition of the known events is the only one that hangs together with itself and with all after history; and this cumulative self-consistency alone would be enough to commend it above the series of isolated quibbles and special interpretations which are all that Anglican apologists are able to oppose to it.

It was Elizabeth whose failure to repeat a schism forced her, in common with her continental allies, to create a Church without a past—the same that even now owes its impressiveness to the royal robber's spoils. Her reign and its revival of Edward's Protestant formularies now enlist one of Dr. Messenger's longest divisions. The last six of its nineteen chapters are given to later events of pertinent but less direct significance. Such are the Jacobite contributions to the subject, the significant revision of the ordinal accompanying the Stuart Restoration, abortive proposals of "reunion," and other indirect witnesses to the attitude of both sides towards Anglican orders. The reader is now prepared for the main and final issue.

This seventh part of Volume II is entitled "the theological discussion and final condemnation of Anglican ordinations." It claims more than two hundred pages; and its thoroughness and scholarly discrimination are really beyond praise, although these qualities have been constant enough throughout. The section opens with the two historic cases of 1684 and 1704, the latter of which, as Leo XIII publicly said, must have been but little known to any Catholic who could treat the subject as problematic. So much less are these cases known to Anglican writers, that some of them ascribe both unwelcome decisions, and especially the latter one, to the judges' acceptance of the now exploded "Nag's Head fable" concerning Parker's consecration to the See of Canterbury. The petitioner's own emphasis (duly recorded) upon this myth may have given occasion to a suspicion which could never have become a confident assertion on the part of any responsible person who had read the records of the case attentively. Dr. Messenger lays the full information before us; indeed, the nameless case of 1684 claims seventeen pages of solid information from contemporary documents, while the Gordon decision of 1704, though already made somewhat more familiar, is handled with parallel thoroughness. The justice of Pope Leo's observation, mentioned above, is evident on all accounts, the decided factor in both cases having been a strictly theological condemnation of the Edwardine ordinal, which in full text, both original and Latin, was in the consultors' hands and submitted to long consideration. It is this highly essential fact which makes these cases of individual inquiry the securest of precedents. They were decided on common and invariable grounds; and the second actually began by reviewing *de novo* the whole process of the first.

Express attention to these two cases was a necessary prelude to the climax

of Dr. Messenger's study, because of their position in the argument of the bull *Apostolicae curae*. Coming now to this event of 1896, which forever closed the question to Catholic debate, Dr. Messenger is as complete as could be reasonably asked. He reviews especially well the literature of the public discussion just preceding the official examination. He makes it clear that the history of invariable Catholic discipline was known on all sides, and that what was sought by Anglo-Catholics was a thorough and authentic examination of the dogmatic justification of this constant practice, not of the fact of its existence. Equally at length he shows that, in spite of the delicate implications of a petition that Rome should sit in judgment on herself, that request was met with every safeguard of impartial exploration and decision. The author fully records the personnel of consultors and judges, the conduct of the inquiry, and the series of appeals from external sources on both sides, which caused Leo XIII, apart from the merits of the case, to hesitate about the timeliness of a public sentence. He then quotes copiously from the bull itself, analyses its argument, and describes the chief public attacks and rebuttals that ensued. Coming next to recent years, Dr. Messenger deals with the Malines Conversations, and with the official attitudes of Old Catholics and eastern schismatical Churches towards Anglican orders. In connection with Malines he comments both correctly and respectfully upon a strange opinion, recorded of one prominent ecclesiastic, which is difficult to reconcile with the authentic and public statement of the mind of the Holy See.

A concluding theological essay on the whole question, and three appendices, bring this exhaustive study to a close. Appendix I discusses "the precise force of *Apostolicae curae* in words of the author previously published. Appendix II deals with Abyssinian ordinations and clears up certain confusions attaching to official discussions of the subject. Appendix III comprises *notanda et corrigenda*, as noted above.

Even the reviewer who thoroughly admires and enjoys a book is still in the unwelcome rôle of critic, and expected to note his exceptions. To begin with the least, a semi-humorous footnote at Father Sidney Smith's expense (I, 420) might have been more aptly aimed at the source which he expressly cites. If we are not mistaken, the "episcopal charge by Coke, of Norwich" (II, 261), is cited by Estcourt, Pollen, and others as a judicial opinion delivered at the Norwich Assizes by Chief Justice Sir Edward Coke.

In developing the Protestant affinities of the early Anglican formularies, an argument of some weight might have been added by emphasizing the significance of the title "the Lord's Supper" in the early English Prayer Books. That *coena Domini*, as denoting the principal public service, had become the common property of continental Protestants and a notorious

mark of "the reform," is shown (in Laderchi's continuation of Baronius) by the Roman examination of English refugees early in 1570, where the question recurs: *An habeat Regina Angliae coenam Domini more Haereticorum?*

There is one matter especially to which we regret that more express attention was not paid. In Anglican periodical literature, and still more in conversation, one is from time to time assured that the bull *Apostolicae curae* merely decided a point of discipline, which, therefore, it is added, must by its very nature be capable of modification if not complete reversal and repeal. As to the practical prospect, it is, of course, excluded by Leo XIII's own statement (fully recorded by Dr. Messenger) to the effect that his sentence was "for all time . . . incapable of revocation." As to the theoretical interpretation just mentioned, nothing could be more patently ridiculous than such a specimen of self-encouragement against all reasonable expectation. The very expression *caput disciplinae*, which occurs in the bull, designates the history, there reviewed, of the Holy See's constant practice of absolute reordination. It was not this practice as a fact, but its justification in Catholic doctrine, that formed the direct scope of examination, both in Anglican request and in accomplished fact. No wonder that the definitive clause of the bull itself bears no resemblance, in its language, to any canonical instrument of discipline. It has no *tolerari potest* or *non potest*, no direction that this or that is to be done or not done, no faintest indication of any decision of future practice. Its sentence is formally dogmatic: a definite religious rite, examined and discussed in full, is declared incapable of conferring the priestly character on its recipient. As for the popular Anglican appeal to merely disciplinary decision, it is needless to say that Dr. Messenger has nowhere given it the least encouragement in word or hint. But we venture the suggestion that a brief discussion and express rejection of this basis of argument might well have had a place in his answers to Anglican objections.

In the days of the controversy of 1896 the present reviewer, then in his first year at college, happened to play a very obscure part in literary production, which made him at least familiar with the issues at stake. He is profoundly grateful to Dr. Messenger, as he believes that many will be, for this monument of thorough collection and mature discussion of all that can bear upon the subject in question.

